

Planning Spring Break? CDC Text Service Provides Zika Updates To Travelers

DOVER – Spring break is all about sunscreen, bathing suits, and travel to warmer weather climates. And this year, it should also be about protecting you and your family from the Zika virus.

DPH and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have a number of resources to inform the public on the impacts of Zika, including the CDC's text messaging service that will inform travelers of Zika updates for their destinations. To receive text messages about Zika for your destination, text PLAN to 855-255-5606 to subscribe.

Zika has been found in several popular spring locations. Delaware's 17 confirmed Zika cases were all caused by mosquito bites while traveling abroad, however, there are warmer climates in the continental United States with local Zika transmission. Anyone planning a trip during the winter or over spring break should educate themselves on Zika's dangers and how to prevent the disease before hopping on a plane or cruise ship for warmer weather.

"Zika is a 'game changer' for warm weather trips," said DPH Director Dr. Karyl Rattay. "Pregnant women and their partners should avoid travel to areas where Zika is found and everyone should protect themselves from mosquito bites. Precautions should be taken such as using EPA-registered insect repellent, wearing long sleeves and pants, and using barrier methods such as condoms and/or dental dams when engaging in sexual activity with someone who could be infected with Zika."

Added Dr. Awele Maduka-Ezeh, "Currently, there is no known treatment for, and no vaccine against, Zika. Prevention is the

only protection. All persons should take proper precautions when traveling to Zika-infected areas as they can get infected with the virus via mosquito bites or sex, while away, and spread it through sexual transmission themselves both when traveling, and also, when they return home.

Mosquito bite avoidance strategies include:

Wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants. When feasible, stay in places with air conditioning or that use window and door screens to keep mosquitoes outside. Use Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)-registered insect repellents. Follow the manufacturer's instructions for reapplication times. All EPA-registered insect repellents are evaluated for effectiveness. Sleep under a mosquito bed net if you are overseas or outside. Keep in mind that the mosquitos that spread Zika bite actively both during the day and the night.

If you have a baby or child:

Do not use insect repellent on babies younger than 2 months of age. Dress your child in clothing that covers arms and legs, or cover the crib, stroller, and baby carrier with mosquito netting. Do not apply insect repellent onto a child's hands, eyes, mouth, and cut or irritated skin. Adults: spray insect repellent onto your hands and then apply to the child's face.

Clothing:

Treat clothing and gear with permethrin or purchase permethrin-treated items. Treated clothing remains protective after multiple washings. See product information to learn how long the protection will last. If treating items yourself, follow the product instructions carefully. Do NOT apply permethrin products directly on skin. They are intended to treat clothing.

Women who have had possible exposure to Zika through travel or sexual contact, regardless of whether or not they exhibited

symptoms or are trying to conceive, should wait at least eight weeks before having unprotected sex. Men who may have been exposed to the virus should wait at least six months before having unprotected sex, regardless of whether or not they are exhibiting symptoms or are planning to conceive. Preventing Zika transmission to a woman who may, or is planning to, conceive in the next few months is particularly important, given Zika's link to serious and even fatal birth defects.

Women who are pregnant or planning to be can find more information on Zika at:

- [in English](#)
- [in Spanish](#)
- [in Haitian Creole](#)

DPH recommends the following resources for the latest on Zika and microcephaly:

- As new Zika findings become available, DPH will update its Zika page to inform Delawareans at <http://de.gov/zika>.
- Use the CDC's new text messaging service to receive Zika updates for your destination. Text PLAN at 855-255-5606 to subscribe.
- Visit the CDC's Zika website for updates and newly infected areas at: <https://www.cdc.gov/zika/>.
- Visit the CDC's website on [microcephaly](#).

A person who is deaf, hard-of-hearing, deaf-blind or speech-disabled can call the DPH phone number above by using TTY services. Dial 7-1-1 or 800-232-5460 to type your conversation to a relay operator, who reads your conversation to a hearing person at DPH. The relay operator types the hearing person's spoken words back to the TTY user. To learn more about TTY availability in Delaware, visit <http://delawarerelay.com>.

Delaware Health and Social Services is committed to improving the quality of the lives of Delaware's citizens by promoting

health and well-being, fostering self-sufficiency, and protecting vulnerable populations. DPH, a division of DHSS, urges Delawareans to make healthier choices with the 5-2-1 Almost None campaign: eat 5 or more fruits and vegetables each day, have no more than 2 hours of recreational screen time each day (includes TV, computer, gaming), get 1 or more hours of physical activity each day, and drink almost no sugary beverages.